

**Board of Veterans Services
Benefits Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 20, 2015**

DRAFT

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) Benefits Committee was held on Monday, April 20, 2015 at the Virginia War Memorial, 621 S. Belvidere St, Richmond.

Members Present

- Belinda Pinckney, Committee Chairman
- William Nicholas, Committee Vice Chairman
- James Icenhour, Committee Member
- Sandra Love, Committee Member
- Don Kaiserman, BVS Chairman
- Johnny Johnson, BVS Vice Chairman
- Jack Hilgers, representing the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF)
- Harold Barton, representing the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC)
- John L. Newby II, Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services (DVS)

Members Absent

- None

State Officials Present

- Steven Combs, Deputy Commissioner, DVS
- Jim Granger, Western Regional Manager, Benefits Services, DVS
- Tom Herthel, DVS Director of Benefits Services
- Judy Reid, DVS IT

Materials Distributed

- Agenda
- Draft minutes of the December 22, 2014 meeting
- 2015 General Assembly – bill summary and budget summary
- Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) One-Page Flyer
- VWWP 2014 Progress Report
- VWWP Rebrand FAQs

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Belinda Pinckney called the meeting to order at 2 p.m. Ms. Sandra Love led the members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Quorum Determination and Agenda Approval

Nine members were recorded as present and a quorum was determined. Chairman Pinckney

asked the new members and DVS staff to introduce themselves. Their names are recorded above.

Chairman Pinckney noted that Agenda Item 6 (DVS Benefits Services Section review) would be moved ahead of Agenda Item 4. There being no other changes, the revised agenda was approved by **unanimous consent**.

Approve draft Minutes of the December 22, 2014 meeting

Mr. James Icenhour made a **motion, seconded** by Ms. Love, to approve the minutes of the December 22, 2014 meeting as presented. The motion carried **unanimously**.

Benefit Services Section

Mr. Tom Herthel delivered a presentation on the Benefits Services Section. The committee members asked many questions during Mr. Herthel's presentation, and at the conclusion expressed their strong approval of all of the steps that have been taken over the past six months to improve services and service capacity to Virginia's veterans. Chairman Pinckney recognized Mr. Herthel and his leadership, and Mr. Herthel in turn recognized the dedication and skill of the entire Benefits team.

It was the consensus of the committee that the funding included in Governor McAuliffe's introduced budget and approved by the 2015 General Assembly was absolutely critical to ensuring that Virginia's veterans and the families are served, and was the culmination of consistent advocacy by the BVS, the JLC, and others. The committee recognized the leadership and support of Governor McAuliffe, all members of the General Assembly, Secretary Harvey, Commissioner Newby, the JLC, and the BVS.

Review of 2015 General Assembly session

Mr. Steven Combs called the members' attention to the budget and legislative summary sheets in the agenda packet. He highlighted several bills, including the four amended care centers bills approved by the General Assembly on April 15. The members had several questions about the new care centers, which Mr. Combs or BVS Chairman Don Kaiserman answered.

Virginia Wounded Warrior Program Rebranding

Mr. Combs called the members' attention to the three handouts in the agenda packet regarding the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP), noting that the first handout gave an overview of VWWP services, that the second was the 2014 Progress Report, and that the third was a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the upcoming VWWP Rebranding. He briefly reviewed the rebranding and timeline. The members asked several questions and voiced their support for the rebranding. It was noted that there should be a more in depth presentation on VWWP at a future Benefits Committee meeting to help the members more fully understand all of the services provided by VWWP.

Open discussion

Chairman Pinckney asked each person present if there were any significant items for further discussion. Mr. William Nicholas asked that Mr. Herthel give a more detailed budget review at the next Benefits Committee meeting, with an emphasis on how the additional resources

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appropriated for Fiscal Year 2016 will be used. Mr. Herthel agreed to do this. Mr. Nicholas noted that this will give the committee a better understanding of future budget requirements (Fiscal Year 2017 and 2018) and shortfalls, and of the role the Board can play in meeting future resource requirements.

Chairman Pinckney asked for in depth presentations on the VWWP and the Veterans Education, Training, and Employment (VETE) section at future committee meetings so that the members could better advocate for additional resources in these areas. Mr. Combs said he would ensure this was done.

The members discussed potential topics for the full Board meeting on May 12 and July 21 meetings, and it was agreed that potential recommendations for the Governor and General Assembly for the 2016 session should be considered at both meetings, with a final decision made at the July 21 meeting. It was noted that items for consideration could come from the BVS committees or through the work of individual members.

Committee report and preparation for the May 12, 2015 BVS meeting

Chairman Pinckney stated that she would prepare the committee's report with the assistance of Mr. Combs and Mr. Herthel.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 4:16 p.m.